

# Fleming Fulton School



## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

**Adopted by the Board of Governors: October 2023**

**Summative review: October 2024**

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## **1.1. School Information**

At Fleming Fulton School, we regard the links between parents and school as vital. We know that we are better together, and therefore we want to ensure that we work in partnership with our parents as we have a common objective - we want the best for our pupils and therefore we know that it takes three, the school community, pupil, and parents. At Fleming Fulton School, we are passionate about the education we offer to our pupils. We are proud to teach and care for pupils aged 3 to 19 years old.

If you have any concerns or complaints please do not hesitate to get in touch - we take such matters very seriously, and we know that although we try very hard, there is always room to improve. We will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible. Both informal and formal stages are within the school complaints policy.

We value our association with you. We all have the same goal - to offer our children the best possible experience - we look forward to working with you closely in the years ahead.

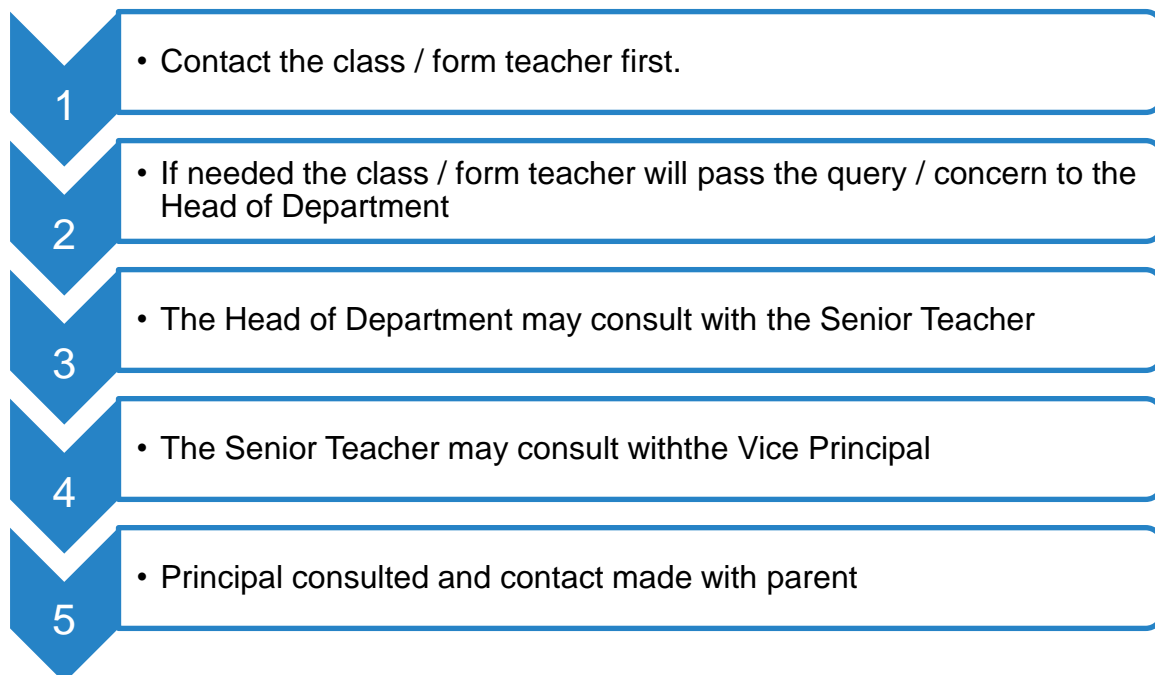
## 1.2. Communication Chart

If you have an issue / concern please use this informal stage which we encourage all parents / carers to follow in the first instance.

Reporting issues/concerns

If you have an issue / concern about your child at school or wish to pass on information, it is important that you follow the procedure below:

Informal Stage



## 2.0 Scope of the Complaints Procedure

A complaint is described as an expression of dissatisfaction with our work.

### 2.1 Complaints with Established Procedures

Our school Complaints Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking complaints seriously at the earliest possible stage, it is hoped that they can be resolved quickly and effectively. We encourage parents / carers to follow the informal stage outlined in the previous page in the first instance.

Some examples of complaints dealt with:

- Not following school policy
- Communication delays / lack of communication
- Difficulties in staff / pupil relationships

This procedure should not be used for complaints with separate established procedures, however if your complaint relates to the school's failure to correctly administer any of these procedures, then you may complain by means of this procedure.

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms, which are not part of the schools complaints procedure, are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The principal/ chair of governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when a complaint is raised.

Exceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school</li><li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li><li>• School Development Proposals</li><li>• Child Protection / Safeguarding</li></ul>

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### 2.2 Anonymous Complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the chairperson of the board of governors to be of a very serious nature. The decision of dealing with such complaints will be at the discretion of the chairperson of the board of governors.

### **3 Aims of the Complaints Procedure**

#### **3.1 When dealing with Complaints**

Our school aims to:

- Encourage resolution as quickly as possible;
- Provide timely responses;
- Keep complainants informed of progress;
- Ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint;
- Have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Fully address complaints and provide an effective response;
- Take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again;
- Be responsive to learning from outcomes that will inform and improve practice within the school;
- Provide a process that is simple to understand and use;
- Be impartial;
- Be non-adversarial.

#### **3.2 Social Media**

In order for complaints to be resolved with confidentiality, with respect to all parties involved and as fairly as possible, the School requests the complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Snapchat, WhatsApp etc. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for all those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

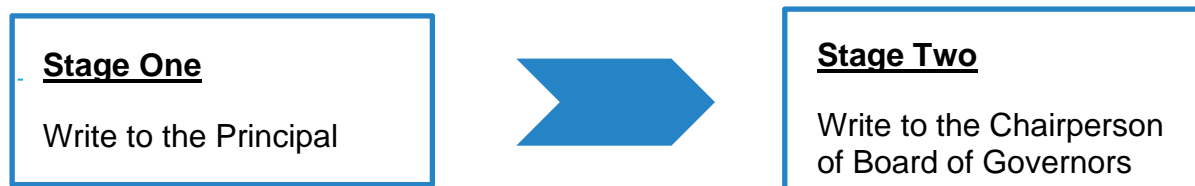
#### **3.3 Availability of Procedure**

A copy of this Procedure is available on our school's website<sup>1</sup> or is available from the school office on request.

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<sup>1</sup> From the **Home Page**, locate School **Info Tab**- Select, **School Policies**.  
<https://www.flemingfulton.org.uk/policies>

## 4 Complaints Procedure – At a Glance



### 4.1 Time Limit

To enable complaints to be resolved, please contact the school as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of the date of the incident(s) about which you are complaining.

### 4.2 Stage One

When making a complaint, (Appendix 01) contact the school principal who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated.

- If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Two. [Appendix 2](#)
- If the complaint is about a member of the Board of Governors, proceed to Stage Two. [Appendix 2](#)

The school requires complaints to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.

When writing your complaint, please provide clear information and include the following: [Appendix 4](#).

- Your name and contact details
- What your complaint is about – please try to be specific
- What you have already done to try to resolve it and
- What you would like the school to do to resolve your complaint

The principal will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but within 10 school working days. This will be a short response and you will be sent a copy of, (or a link to) the school's complaints procedure. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

If, for any reason, the consideration of a complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress. These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage One, the complaint may be progressed to Stage Two which is overseen by the board of governors.

### 4.3 Stage Two

If your complaint is about the:

- Principal or a member of the Board of Governors or if the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors. Appendix 2.
- Chair of the Board of Governors, write to the Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Governors. Appendix 3.

If this presents difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with the process. The letter should be left at the school office and marked 'Private and Confidential' for the attention of the Chair/Vice Chair of the Board of Governors. The Chairperson/Vice-chairperson will convene a sub-committee to consider the complaint.

In the case of the complaint being about the Principal, Chairperson or Governor this sub-committee will investigate the complaint.

Please provide clear information and include the following:

- Reason(s) why you disagree with the stage one findings
- Any aspect in which you think that the school's complaints procedure was not fully followed

The chairperson of the sub-committee will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days from date of receipt of the second letter. The response will be issued by the chairperson of the sub-committee and will indicate, with reasons, whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

If, for any reason, the review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainant(s) and respondent(s) will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

The response will be issued to the respondent(s) by the chairperson of the sub-committee and will indicate if the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.



#### **4.4 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)** **[www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)**

If following Stage Two you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The Ombudsman provides a free, independent, and impartial service for handling complaints about schools in Northern Ireland. You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received a poor service from a school and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the School. The school must advise in its concluding letter that the complaint may be referred to the NIPSO if you remain dissatisfied.

Contact details for NIPSO are provided below.

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman  
Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman  
Progressive House  
33 Wellington Place  
Belfast  
BT1 6HN

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO  
Telephone: 02890 233821  
Freephone: 0800 34 34 24  
Email: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)  
Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

## 5 What To Expect Under This Procedure

### 5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with complaints, we will ensure:

- Fair treatment;
- Courtesy;
- A timely response;
- Accurate advice;
- Respect for privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility of consultation with other appropriate parties about the complaint; and
- Clear reasons for decisions.

### 5.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

When making a complaint it is important that you:

- Raise issues in a timely manner
- Treat our staff with respect and courtesy
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised
- Use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels

### 5.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation

Where a meeting is arranged parties may be accompanied but not represented by another person.

- Complainant: - should be informed that they may be accompanied but not represented by another person during the process e.g., spouse, friend, family member or interpreter, provided this person is not offering legal representation or acting in an official capacity.
- If the complainant feels unable to speak on their own behalf, they may avail of support from outside agencies as agreed with the school. (Local MLAs / Councillors / Citizens' Advice Bureau / Parenting NI / Children's commissioner)
- Staff Members: - should be informed that they may be accompanied or represented by another person during the process e.g., union representative, colleague<sup>2</sup>
- Pupils: permission should be sought from parents / guardians and parent, guardian or other nominated adult should accompany pupils.

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<sup>2</sup> For information on workers' statutory rights to be accompanied, this should be read in accordance with Section 3 of the LRA's Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (Paras 110-116).

- It may be appropriate to seek a written statement if a person is unable to meet for any reason.
- Respondents should be informed when a complaint is made against them and a copy of the complaint sent to them.

This Procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

#### **5.4 Timeframes**

Stage One – Normally acknowledge as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days, with final response normally provided within 20 school working days

Stage Two – Normally acknowledge as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days, with final response normally provided within 20 school working days

If, for any reason, the consideration / review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainants/respondents will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

#### **5.5 Equality**

The school requires complaints to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process.

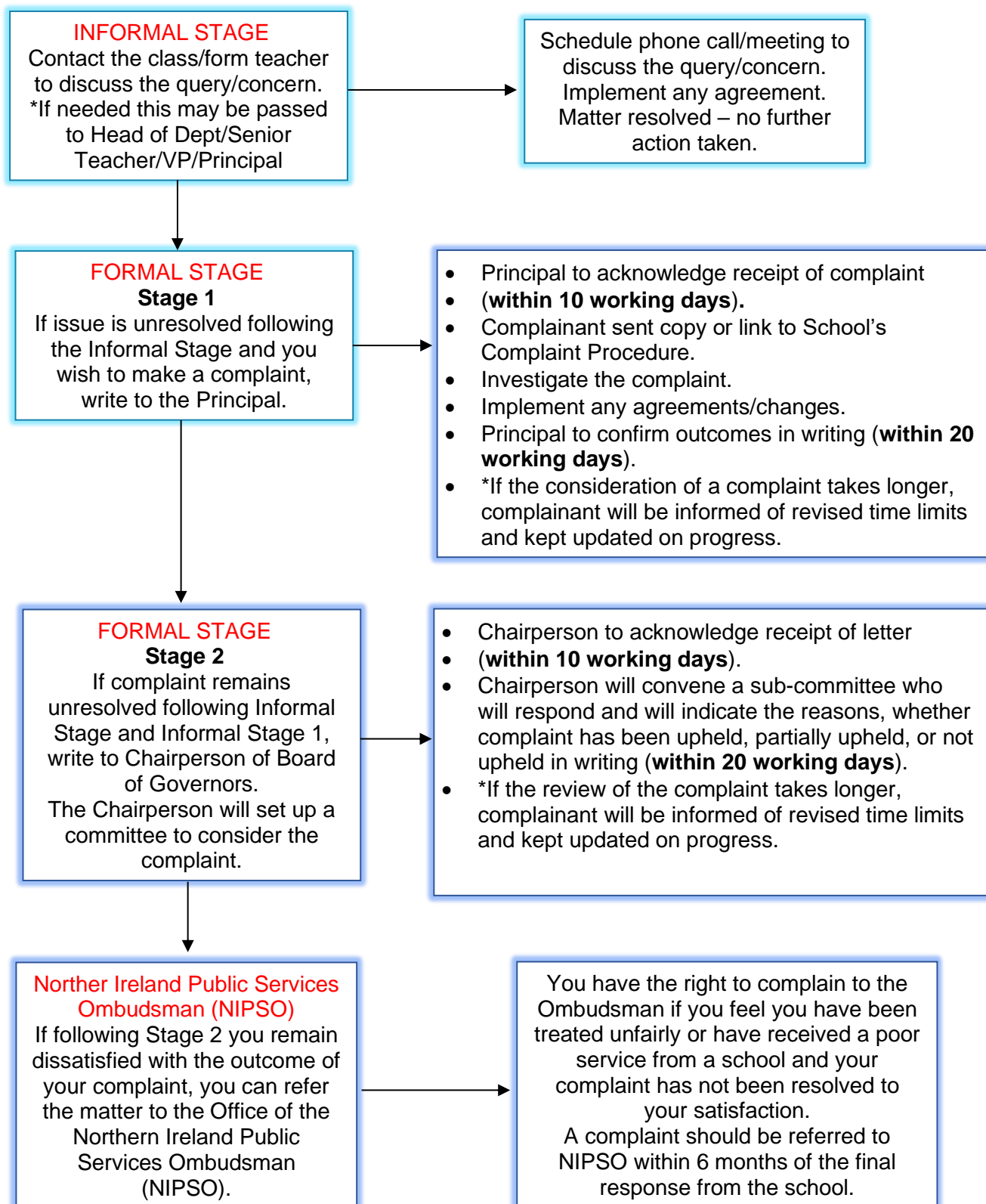
#### **5.6 Unreasonable Complaints**

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been completed and the complaint has been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The school must balance the rights of an individual to make a complaint and have it fairly investigated with the rights of staff and Governors not to be subjected to unacceptable actions or behaviour.

Any decision to treat a complainant as unreasonable must take into account the need to ensure that the complaints procedure is being fairly applied and every attempt has been made to communicate and address concerns about behaviour/conduct with the complainant. In the event that such a decision has been taken, the complainant will be advised accordingly.

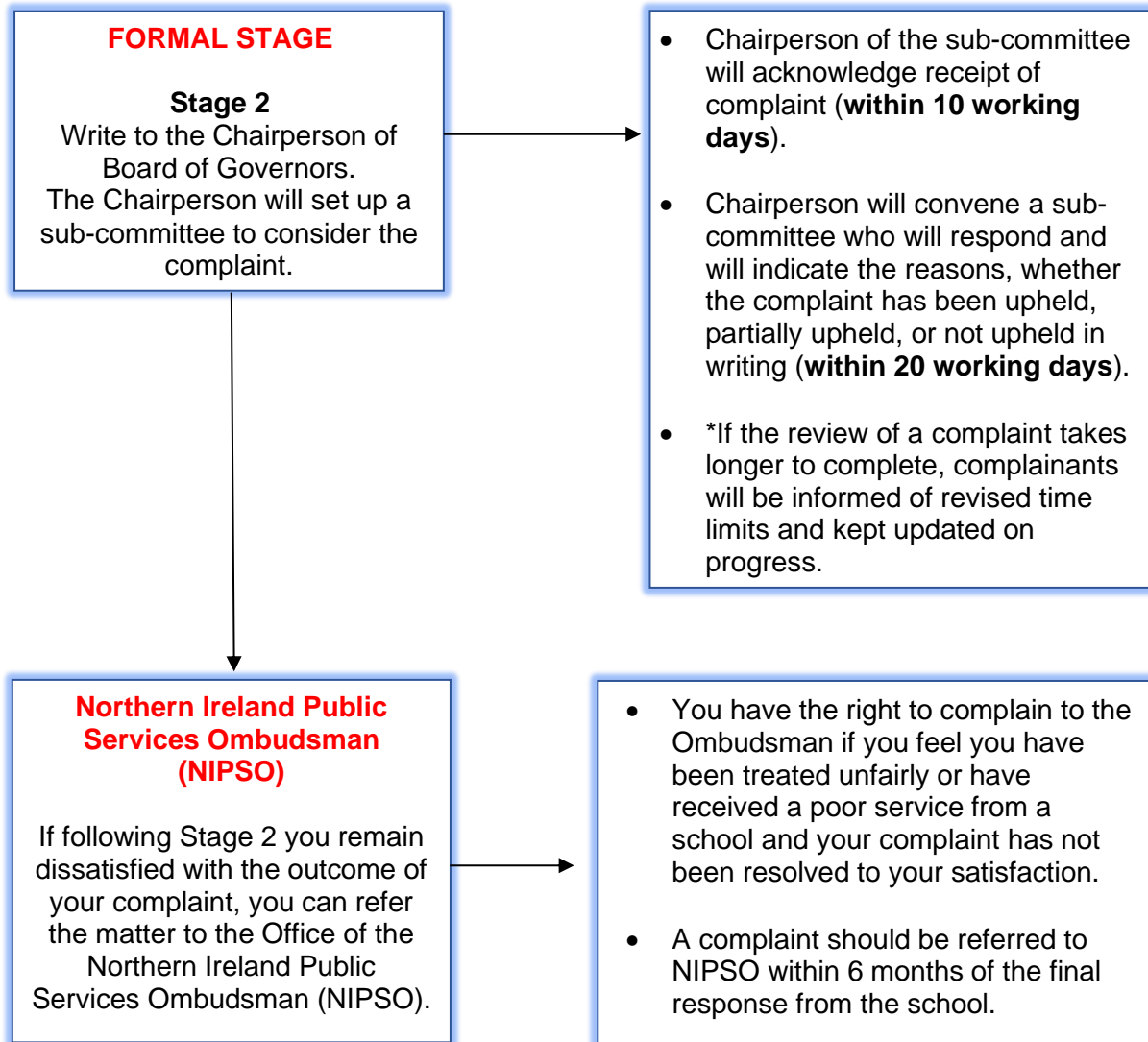
## APPENDIX 1

### Making a complaint about a school member of staff (other than the Principal)



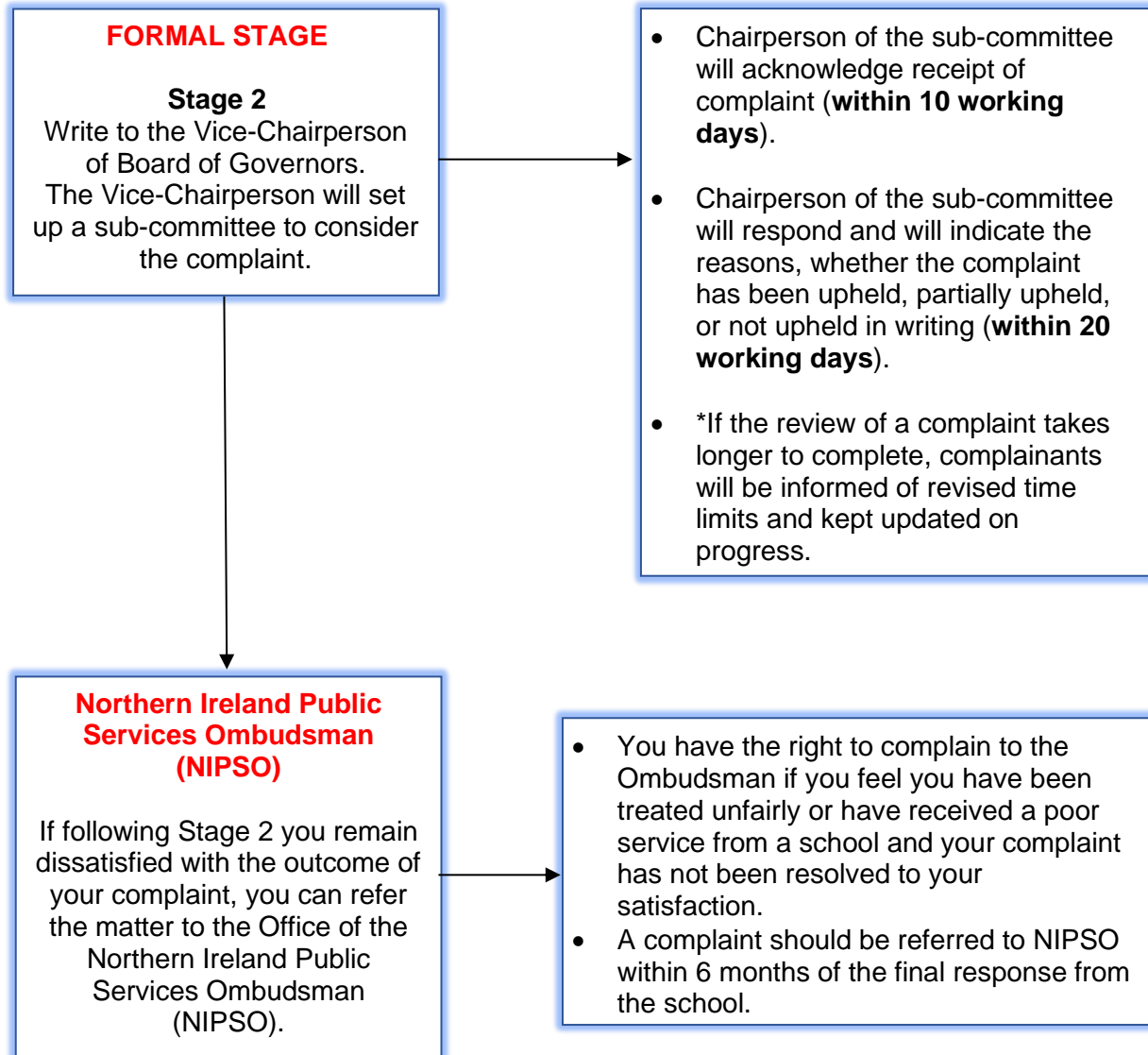
## APPENDIX 2

### Making a complaint about the Principal / Member of Board of Governors



## APPENDIX 3

### Making a complaint about the Chairperson of the Board of Governors



## APPENDIX 4

**Making a complaint to the school** – This form can be requested from the school office or downloaded from the school website **Home Page**, > locate **School Info Tab**- Select, **School Policies**. <https://www.flemingfulton.org.uk/policies>

This form has been provided to assist you with completing your complaint.

### Section 1

Name	
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### Section 2: Details of the individual about whom the complaint is being made:

Name	Position in School

### Section 3: What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (who did you speak to and what was the response)?

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**Section 4:** Please outline the background to your complaint: please be as specific as possible as this will assist the panel in their investigation of the complaint and in coming to a decision.

When did it happen?	
Where did it happen?	
What happened?	
How have the actions of the individual/school affected you/your child?	



What would be an acceptable outcome to your complaint?	
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**Section 5:** Details of the person making the complaint.  
Please fill in this section with YOUR details.

Your Title	<input type="checkbox"/> Mr / <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs / <input type="checkbox"/> Miss / <input type="checkbox"/> Ms / Other <input style="width: 80px;" type="text"/>		
Your first or known name:			
Your Surname			
Your Address and Postcode			
Your Contact Telephone Number			
Your E-mail			
Signature		Date	

**Where to send this completed form:**

**By Post:**

FLEMING FULTON SCHOOL  
Upper Malone Road  
BELFAST  
BT9 6TY

**By E-mail:**

[info@ffs.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@ffs.belfast.ni.sch.uk)

If you require any information before completing this form, you can contact us in the following ways:

- Telephone: (028) 90613877 / 90611917 / 9061191
- Email: [info@ffs.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@ffs.belfast.ni.sch.uk)